Quality Growth

Contributed by AGRC Administrator
19, Oct. 2007

QGET is a statewide effort to improve the quality of information available to plan for Utah's future. The focus of the committee is to enhance the technical modeling tools, data, and processes such that decision makers have growth-related information related to air quality, transportation, water, and land use that is comprehensive, reliable, accessible, and consistent.

Since its founding in 1996, the objectives of the QGET technical committee have been twofold:1) Improve the technical and analytical models
used to understand growth, and 2.) Improve the processes and procedures that accompany the management of the data and models.

AGRC has assisted the QGET project with GIS technical assistance and geospatial data.

U.S. Geological Survey Cooperative Agreement # 1434-HQ-97-AG-01857

Wasatch Front Growth Planning Data Clearinghouse and Education Project.

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Background

Over the past five years, Utah has experienced one of the nation's highest growth rates in population and economic activity. Utah's population growth rate ranked 3rd in the nation in 1996, a year in which the state's population surpassed 2 million. Of these 2 million residents, approximately 1.5 million live along the Wasatch Front, a 7-county region stretching about 90 miles from north to south. Concentrated growth along the Wasatch Front has made Utah one of the most urban states in the nation (ranked 6th). The Wasatch Front expects to receive the large majority of Utah's projected 3.3 million population increase by the year 2020. The growth of these seven populous counties has caused increased traffic congestion, changing land use patterns, rising land values, and threats to environmental quality.

The need for carefully planned infrastructure improvements has generated civic and private regional growth management initiatives. These initiatives include QGET (Quality Growth Efficiency Tools), The UCLCC (Utah Critical Lands Conservation Committee), The Legislative Air Quality, Transportation and Land Use Task Force, Envision Utah - A Public/Private Partnership for quality growth, and preparations for the 2002 Winter Olympics. The Wasatch Front Growth Planning Data Clearinghouse and Education Project, partially funded by the FGDC, will assist these growth management initiatives by making land use/land cover, zoning, population/demographic projections, and transportation planning data and documentation available to many diverse interests including government leaders, planners, and citizens.

Scope of Work

This project encompasses three major objectives based within the 7-County Wasatch Front Region: (a) expanding the Utah National Geospatial Data Clearinghouse node to include existing land use/land cover, zoning, population & demographic and traffic analysis zone data; (b) developing standards and metadata for comprehensive, integrated data layers for inclusion in the clearinghouse to support regional growth modeling efforts; and, (c) implementing an educational outreach program to explain the growth planning information available through the Clearinghouse and the importance of GIS technology, data sharing, and data documentation to support integrated regional planning. Following is a description of the results of these objectives;

- Expand the Utah National Geospatial Data Clearinghouse node to include existing land use/land cover, zoning, population & demographic and traffic analysis zone data. The metadata for these layers was developed primarily by the two Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's) in the study area; Wasatch Front Regional Council and Mountainland Association of Governments. The MPO's worked with county and local government agencies in generating metadata files. Additional metadata files were created by staff at AGRC. The metadata is available through the Utah State Geographic Information Database A2 NSDI Clearinghouse node and can be accessed directly at www.its.state.ut.us/agrc/html/qget_ccap.html .
- Develop standards and metadata for comprehensive, integrated data layers for inclusion in the clearinghouse to support regional growth modeling efforts. The attribute structures from the general plan layers were integrated to create a generalized landuse classification for the metropolitan portion of the Greater Wasatch Area. This allowed us to merge all

the general plan layers into one theme for display and analysis. This is the first time all the general plans were brought together and shown on one map.
- Implementing an educational outreach program to explain the growth planning information available through the Clearinghouse and the importance of GIS technology, data sharing, and data documentation to support integrated regional planning. We held a workshop for local planners and GIS professionals in Salt Lake City to kick off the metadata collection phase of the project. Attendees were introduced to the clearinghouse, metadata concepts, and how the information is used in the urban planning process. Following this workshop, MPO and AGRC staff worked with the entities involved to develop metadata capabilities and create their metadata. This one on one outreach with local governments allowed us to promote the importance of data sharing, coordination, and standards at the local level to support regional planning. It also reinforced the role of the MPO's as the agency responsible for coordination and integration of this data.

Summary

This project was valuable in identifying and documenting data layers for use in a regional planning process, but more importantly fostered an understanding of the importance of data coordination and standards to integrate local data for use at a regional level. With the help of this grant and other aspects of the growth planning project we are situated to work closely with local entities to develop standards and integrated data layers. We also presented this information at a Utah Geographic Information Council conference in St. George, Utah, in anticipation of developing a similar process to plan for growth in that region.

This project also identified deficiencies in existing data, most importantly current land use. As a result we have initiated substantial efforts to integrate data at the parcel level to derive current land use as well as population and employment distributions. Expertise in data documentation and dissemination gained through this grant as well as the relationships that were created will be important as we move forward with these data development efforts.